

Center for NYC Affairs The New School (page 1)

Project: Understanding FAFSA

The FAFSA application process is overly complicated and research shows that many urban students in New York City simply give up. We designed a poster, manual and website to simplify the steps teenagers (and the adults who help them) need to take in order to get money for college.

Background

Most students have to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid - better known as FAFSA - to secure financial support from the government and colleges. But the form can be tricky for many students—particularly those who are recent arrivals to the U.S., or live in homes different from the traditional two-parent family that FAFSA was designed for – which is the reality for many teens living in NYC. The New School’s Center for NYC Affairs’ research found that a discouraging number of students simply gave up on the form, and with it, a crucial opportunity for college matriculation and success.

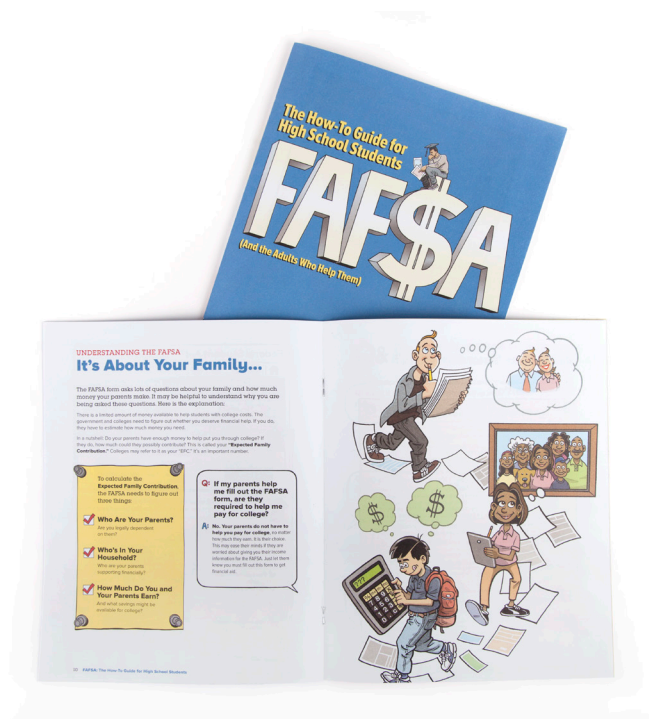
Challenge

For the initial phase, Center for NYC Affairs (CFNYCA) envisioned a friendly and fun instructional website and poster that would speak to students as the primary audience, but could also easily be used by guidance counselor, teachers, and volunteers in student training sessions.

Solution

Working collaboratively with the project team, after two months we had developed a beautifully designed piece with a 'road map' concept. Because it was a step by step guide, using a path or road seemed like an appropriate premise. The sketch evolved into a computer 'comp' where we placed all the text, but left placeholders for the illustrator, at first in black and white before committing to color.

(Con't next page)



▲ UNDERSTANDING FAFSA - MANUAL



▲ WWW.UNDERSTANDINGFAFSA.ORG



Stone Soup
CREATIVE

DESIGN & BRANDING
FOR NONPROFITS

Center for NYC Affairs The New School (page 2)

Project: Understanding FAFSA

It was succinctly written to direct college-bound seniors down the path they need to take to complete the FAFSA form, finally arriving at the ivy-clad gates of a typical institution of higher education. Hurdles were identified that many students encounter, along with solutions and additional resources.

However, a new challenge presented itself. We tried to make it as accessible as possible, but the FAFSA process is too complex, and the poster was not the simple document we had initially envisioned.

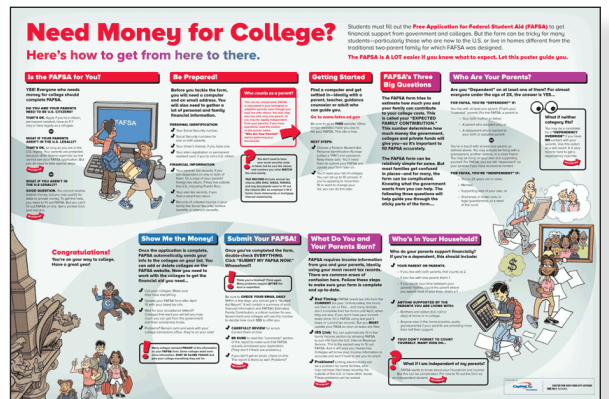
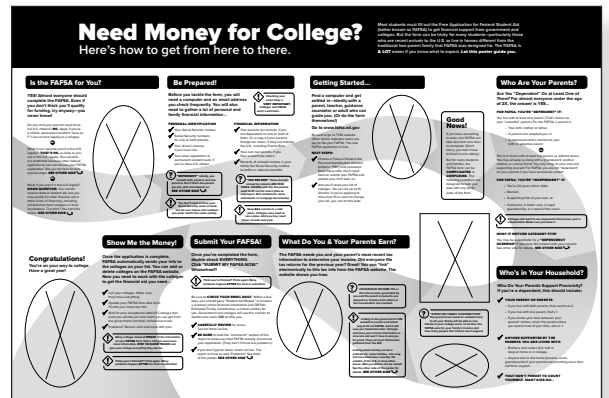
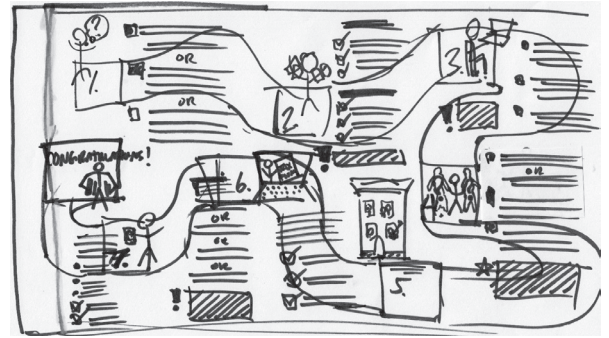
Re-thinking the best vehicle to help CFNYC meet its goals, we re-purposed the information, artwork, and design, ultimately creating a thirty two-page manual instead—which is available as a free PDF download from the new companion website we also designed and developed: www.understandingfafsa.org.

Results

Twenty thousand copies of the manual were sent directly to all NYC Department of Education high school principals, guidance counselors and college counselors – first in an initial printing, then in a second after demand exceeded inventory, and then finally in a third print run, along with a new Spanish version. ☺

"Congratulations on a job well done with the FAFSA guide. I think it is stupendous!! Really love the look and feel of the way you captured and delivered the information on a often hard to understand topic."

—DEBBIE, HEAD OF TRAINING, GODDARD-RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER, OPTIONS CENTER



▲ UNDERSTANDING FAFSA POSTER - SKETCH TO FINAL (23-IN X 32-IN)